

Thomas Black's Smoke House
"Ockanickon Farm"
Monmouth Road, East of Jobstown
Springfield Township
Burlington County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-636

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Thomas Black's Smoke House
"Ockanickon Farm"
Monmouth Road, East of Jobstown
Springfield Township
Burlington County, New Jersey

Owner and occupant of farm: James L. Bailey

Date of Erection: 1825 per inscribed stone

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Thomas Black (1784-1864)

Present Condition: Original, still usable

Number of Stories: One

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - brick

Exterior walls - brick

Interior walls - none

Chimney - none

Roof - gable, wood shingled

Historical Data:

The identity of the owner of this "Ockanickon Farm" in 1825 for whom was erected the smoke house here surveyed (as indicated by the initials T.B. over the date figures 1825 cut in a stone set over the entrance door of this building) is discovered by search of title in the public records and reported as follows:

By deed of 10 May 1699, Benjamin Jones and his wife Sarah, of Burlington County, conveyed to William Black Jr., of Chesterfield Township in the same county, 200 acres "at a place called Oneanikon" in Springfield Township. The grantee William Black, being still of Chesterfield, describing himself as eldest son

and heir of John Black deceased and as grandson of William Black, conveyed the same tract to Thomas Black of Springfield Township in the same county by his deed of 29 October 1744, reciting the deed above mentioned.

Thomas Black of Springfield, who thus came into possession of the farm in 1744, resided thereon at the date of his will, 11 September 1751 (proved 12 October next) in which he devised the profits of the plantation to his wife Mary Black during widowhood, and the farm to an expected child, if living to the age of 21, otherwise to testator's brothers, William and Samuel Black equally.

John Black, posthumous son and sole heir of Thomas Black abovesaid, came into possession of the farm upon attaining his majority, about 1773, and died in or before 1815 intestate, whereupon his "various large tracts" in Burlington County passed to his children Thomas, John and Mary Black^(a).

The son Thomas Black of Springfield Township, born 1784, thus inherited the part of the farm on which the residence inscribed 1809 and the smoke house inscribed T. B. 1825 (for him) were erected, which latter is the subject of our survey. By his will of 8 February 1856, proved 9 March 1864, he devised to his sons John W. Black and Thomas Black equally all his "Homestead Farm or Plantation on which I now dwell", describing it as containing some 186 acres and as fronting on the south side of the road from Mt. Holly to Freehold, "usually called the Monmouth Road." He empowered the executors to sell the 180 acre farm on which his son William I. Black then lived. On that farm was located the smoke house mentioned above.

(a) Recited in deed of division of real estate of John Black late of Springfield Twp. decd. intest., dated 12 Sept. 1815, by which son Thomas Black et al. quitclaimed to bro. John Black a 309A. tract having a frontage of some 4800 ft. on north side of the same Monmouth Rd. with the houses, etc., being part of the homestead farm of decd. On this tract stands the smoke house labelled J. Black 1786 which we have also surveyed. See NJ-263.

Accordingly the executors, by their deed of 5 March 1875, conveyed to Charles N. Black of New York City the said 180 acre farm, describing it as being "the middle portion of the farm, the property of the late Thomas Black deceased", with all and singular the houses, buildings, etc., and as bounded east by land of John W. and Thomas Black, south by that of Libby and Parker, and north by Monmouth Road.

The grantee, Charles N. Black of New York City, by his will of 11 November 1884, proved 13 July 1887, devised all his estate to his wife and four children equally. The widow, Mary K. L. Black, of the borough of Manhattan, New York City, devised all her real estate formerly owned by her late husband to her two sons, Charles and James. By deed of 23 January 1905, Charles N. Black conveyed his half share in the 320 acre farm in Springfield Township, Burlington County, New Jersey, to his brother James D. Black of Jobstown. By his will dated 6 November 1935 and proved 14 January 1938, this James D. Black of Jobstown devised his residence and farm of 180 acres near that village in Springfield Township, to his nephew James L. Bailey. The last named remains as owner and occupant of this farm at the time of our survey of the Smoke House thereon in March 1940. He states that the name "Ockanickon Farm" appearing on a signboard at the entrance gate has always been applied to the place. Probably it is derived from the Indian name "Oneanikon" which is used to designate the locality in the deed of 1699 first above cited.

Architectural Analysis:

This example of smoke house (formerly a feature of every farm" for the curing of meats for winter use is remarkable in having a separate fire chamber. Usually the smoldering fire of hickory wood was built in the center of the ventless smoke house itself.

Reference:

Search of title in the Land and Probate records of the Province of New Jersey (in the Office of the Secretary of State), and of the county of Burlington, by Oscar F. Benjamin, H.A.B.S. research editor, report received 3 May 1940

Lewis D. Cook
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer